



Best Practices to Prevent COVID-19

Guidance for Hosting Winter Holiday Events

For the latest version of this guidance, please check <http://ph.lacounty.gov/media/coronavirus/holidays.htm>

The winter holidays are a time for joyous celebrations, family get-togethers, and beloved seasonal traditions. This guide for businesses and venues outlines steps to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 while hosting winter holiday events. COVID-19 continues to circulate in LA County due to the highly infectious Delta variant, and everyone must take steps to reduce risk, especially during the winter season.

Per published reports, factors that increase the risk of infection, including transmission to people more than 6 feet away, include:

- **Enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation or air handling.** Poor ventilation can cause respiratory fluids to build up in the air space. The fluids include very fine droplets and aerosol particles which can carry the COVID-19 virus.
- **Increased exhalation of respiratory fluids.** This happens, for example, when an infectious person exercises or raises their voice.
- **Prolonged exposure** to these conditions.

In general, outdoor holiday activities where there is ample space and ventilation, such as tree lightings, menorah or Kwanzaa candle lightings, Las Posadas community processions, holiday light displays, and open-air craft fairs, are safer than indoor events. Conversely, indoor events with poor ventilation and crowds of people carry higher risks.

Below is a summary of requirements and best practices for businesses and venues that host holiday events to enhance safety for their workers, customers, and communities, and lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission within their establishments. In addition to this information, please remember:

- Businesses and venues that host Mega Events (indoor events with more than 1,000 attendees or outdoor events with more than 10,000 attendees) must follow the [Health Officer Order](#) requirements for [Mega Events](#). At all Mega Events, attendees must provide proof of full vaccination or a negative test taken within the prior 72 hours.
- Businesses and venues that serve food and beverages should follow DPH Best Practice Guidance for [Food and Beverage Services](#). Nightclubs, bars, lounges, breweries, wineries and distilleries must additionally follow the [Health Officer requirements](#) for these businesses.
- Businesses located in the City of Los Angeles should consult the [SafePass LA](#) website and the [FAQ's](#) for details about the city's [Vaccination Verification Ordinance](#), which applies to many business locations in the city.

Follow mask rules

- ✓ **Follow mask rules for customers and employees:** The LA County [Health Officer Order](#) requires people ages 2 years and older, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a face mask



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at all indoor public settings, including all public and private businesses, and at outdoor Mega Events.

- ✓ **Customers may remove masks temporarily while indoors or while attending an outdoor Mega Event in only limited circumstances**, such as when they are **actively** eating and drinking in designated dining areas, while at their seats, at a counter, or another stationary location. Customers must also wear masks at outdoor events when they enter indoor areas, such as restrooms, restaurants, retail shops, concourses, or concession stands, even if the event is not large enough to be considered a Mega Event.
- ✓ **Performers may unmask indoors to perform if they are fully vaccinated or tested at least twice weekly**. Please note that this exception does not apply to indoor TK-12 school-sponsored productions. See Musical and Theatrical Productions below.
- ✓ **Use your online outlets and [signage](#) at the entry to your business** to explain your holiday business COVID-19 policies, including the requirement that everyone must wear a face mask while indoors on your premises and the message that visitors must not enter the premises if sick or symptomatic.

Screen attendees

- ✓ **Screen guests, staff, performers, and crew for symptoms¹** before they attend the event and ask them not to attend if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or if they are under isolation or quarantine orders.
- ✓ **Consider requiring all guests to be either fully vaccinated²** against COVID-19 or to have had a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours of attending any indoor event with less than 1,000 attendees.
- ✓ **Post [signage](#)** to remind everyone who enters your establishment (including customers, vendors and delivery people) that they should NOT enter if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or if they are under isolation or quarantine orders.

Reduce crowding

- ✓ **Implement policies and practices that support physical distancing:** Whenever possible, take steps to reduce crowding and enable employees and customers to physically distance from each other – generally at least 6 feet of distance (about 2 arm lengths) is recommended, although this is not a guarantee of safety, especially in enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces.

¹ Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after being exposed to the virus and may include: fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, new loss of taste or smell, fatigue, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea. This list does not include all possible symptoms of COVID-19. Some people with COVID-19 never get symptoms. Visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidcare to learn more about what to do if you are sick.

² A person is considered fully vaccinated against COVID-19 two (2) weeks after: the second dose of a Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine series, a single dose of Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine or after completing a series of a COVID-19 vaccine that has been listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization. See [fully vaccinated](#) web page for more information.

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- ✓ **Avoid the use of attractions that are enclosed** such as bounce houses. Bounce houses increase the likelihood of crowding, make it difficult for children to keep their masks on, and allow for the build-up of exhaled particles in an enclosed area. Similarly, avoid hosting Santa visits inside of Santa's workshop or other enclosures.
- ✓ **Establish procedures to prevent crowding** among persons waiting to enter or exit your event and designate staff to help attendees move through the event space.
- ✓ **Use tape, signs, or other visual cues** such as decals or colored tape on the floor, placed six feet apart, to guide customers about where to stand to avoid crowding and to encourage distancing where lines may form.
- ✓ **Consider using strategies such as timed ticketing** for holiday attractions such as Santa's workshop, light shows, or indoor craft fairs, or limit your venue capacity if you are hosting a winter party or performance.
- ✓ **If possible, maintain or expand your outdoor capacity** to enable more guests to wait, eat, drink and socialize outdoors where ventilation is better.

Serving food and beverages

- ✓ **Follow [DPH Food and Beverage Service recommendations](#)** if you serve food or beverages at your event.
- ✓ **Dining outdoors is best**, especially for customers who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- ✓ **If dining indoors**, it is recommended that you reserve indoor spaces as much as possible for persons who provide verification that they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Seat those who are not verified as being fully vaccinated in an outdoor service area whenever possible.
- ✓ **Have a separate area in your venue for drinking and dining** to minimize mixing of people who are wearing masks continuously and those who are removing their masks while they are actively eating or drinking. Diners must be sitting or standing in a stationary place or in their ticketed seat while eating or drinking.
- ✓ **If handing out favors**, set up a station with individually packaged bags so customers can grab and go. If possible, offer several stations where customers can pick up favors to reduce crowding.

Hosting a safer holiday event

- ✓ **Visits with Santa Claus:** Some businesses, such as indoor malls and downtown shopping districts, like to arrange opportunities for children to meet Santa and pose for photos. If your business is hosting an event with Santa, take the following steps to make it safer:
 - ✓ Make sure that the actor or volunteer playing Santa is fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and, if eligible, has received a booster two weeks before playing Santa.
 - ✓ If held indoors, Santa and all participants must wear a face mask.

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- ✓ If held outdoors, it is recommended that Santa and all participants wear a face mask while interacting and remove the face mask only when it's time to take the photo.
- ✓ Encourage other employees, such as elves and photographers, to maintain physical distance (6 feet or two arm lengths) from others.
- ✓ Consider using timed entry to reduce crowding and long lines.
- ✓ **Workplace Holiday Parties and Events:** Many employers want to celebrate the holidays this year, especially since celebrations were not possible last year. Consider taking the following steps to make your workplace holiday celebration safer:
 - ✓ Consider alternatives to the traditional party to lower the risk of exposures. Alternatives might include planning an active, outdoor activity such as ice skating, hiking, or a scavenger hunt, or an outdoor volunteer opportunity that allows your team to give back to the community. Another option might be to give staff an extra day off that they can use during the holidays as they please.
 - ✓ If you plan a traditional party, make sure to find an outdoor location for your holiday celebration. Outdoor gatherings are much safer than indoor ones and many venues offer outdoor areas for get-togethers.
 - ✓ If you are serving food and drinks, follow the Best Practice Guidance for [Food and Beverage Service](#). Consider offering single servings or a buffet with servers instead of self-service food buffets.
 - ✓ If you must have an indoor event, make sure there is plenty of space to allow employees to safely distance themselves from others, especially while eating and drinking.
- ✓ **Holiday Light Displays:** Holiday lights, including menorah and tree lighting celebrations, are typically safer already because they occur outdoors. Consider using a ticketing system (even if the event is free) to judge the crowd that will attend your event and make sure you are able to comply with state and local requirements. Communicate your COVID-19 precautions using your business's online channels.
- ✓ **Musical and Theatrical Productions:** Holiday productions play an important role in seasonal traditions. Performances can be made safer by following the appropriate DPH best practice guidance ([Mega Events](#) or [Smaller Events](#)). In addition, consider the following:
 - ✓ Hold musical and theatrical productions outdoors, if possible.
 - ✓ If held indoors, consider requiring attendees to be fully vaccinated or to have a negative test taken within 72 hours of the performance.
 - ✓ Performers, including young performers under age 18, may remove their masks indoors during community performances if specific criteria are met*. The performers must be fully vaccinated or tested within 72 hours before the performance (single performance) or twice weekly (ongoing performances). Requiring both full vaccination and a recent negative test provides a higher level of safety and is recommended. Unmasked performers must be separated from the audience by at least 12 feet during the performance. During rehearsals, masks should be worn by performers as much as possible.

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*Please note that this exception does not apply to indoor TK-12 school-sponsored productions. Per state guidelines, masking is required at all times at indoor school settings. An indoor TK-12 school-sponsored performance includes any performing arts activity that is supervised, organized, or sponsored by the school and includes students as part of their curricular or extracurricular programming, regardless of whether the performance is held at the school campus or at an offsite venue.

- ✓ **New Year's Eve Celebrations:** As described above, outdoor holiday celebrations are safer than indoor celebrations. Venues that host indoor New Year's celebrations must follow [County](#) mask rules and should also consider requiring full vaccination or a negative test for admission even if it is not required by [City](#) or [County](#) rules.

Support handwashing

- ✓ Offer hand sanitizer at the entry of your facility with signage promoting use.
- ✓ Place handwashing stations or hand sanitizer at entry and outside communal bathrooms with signage promoting use. Employees handling food are required to wash their hands as outlined in the [CRFC](#).
- ✓ Posters in multiple languages that [remind people to wash or sanitize their hands](#) and show [how to wash their hands](#) are available in the [signage section](#) of the [Best Practices for Businesses and Employers](#) webpage.

Ventilate

Outdoors is safer than indoors. If your winter holiday event cannot be hosted outdoors, then it is important to maximize ventilation.

- ✓ Make sure your building's HVAC system is in good, working order. Maximize ventilation. Options include installing portable high-efficiency air cleaners, upgrading the building's air filters to the highest efficiency possible, and making other modifications to increase the quantity of outside air and ventilation in all working areas.
- ✓ When weather and working conditions allow, increase fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Consider using fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows – position window fans to blow air outward, not inward. See guidance below if there are performers.
- ✓ Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased. Consider use of carbon dioxide monitors to monitor the effectiveness of your ventilation in more densely occupied indoor spaces.
- ✓ If your event has performers who will generate aerosols (such as singers or musicians playing wind or brass instruments) take the following steps:
 - ✓ Assess the direction of the air flow in the room to determine where the air is exiting the room. In buildings with HVAC systems, this will be the air-return vents; if doors or windows are open, check the direction that the air is flowing.
 - ✓ During performances (including rehearsals), position aerosol-generating performers closer to the locations where the air is exiting the room.

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- ✓ Keep your background music volume low so that customers and employees do not have to talk loudly to be heard.
- ✓ See State [Interim guidance for Ventilation, Filtration, and Air Quality in Indoor Environments](#).

Communicate

- ✓ Post [signage](#) so that customers who are entering your venue are aware of your COVID-19 safety policies, including the requirement that all customers must wear a face mask while indoors except when actively eating and drinking.
- ✓ Assign staff to remind attendees that they must wear a face mask at all times when indoors or in all areas of the venue when attending an outdoor Mega Event, except when they are actively eating or drinking, as specified above.
- ✓ Use advanced registration as much as possible for your event so you know how many people will attend. Advanced registration can also help you to convey your COVID-19 safety plans to guests before they attend.
- ✓ Use your online platforms to communicate your Winter Holiday COVID-19 safety policies to the public, including the requirement that all attendees must wear a face mask while indoors or when attending an outdoor Mega Event.